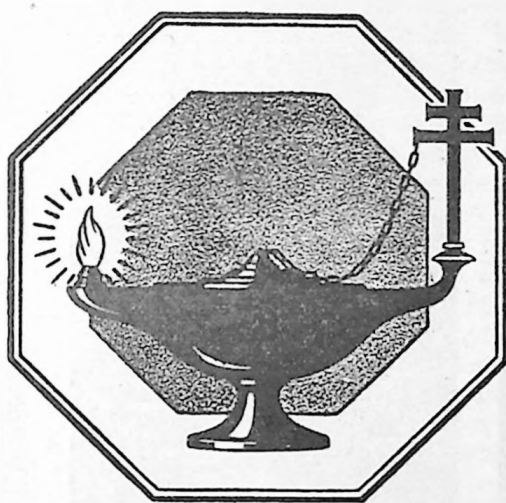


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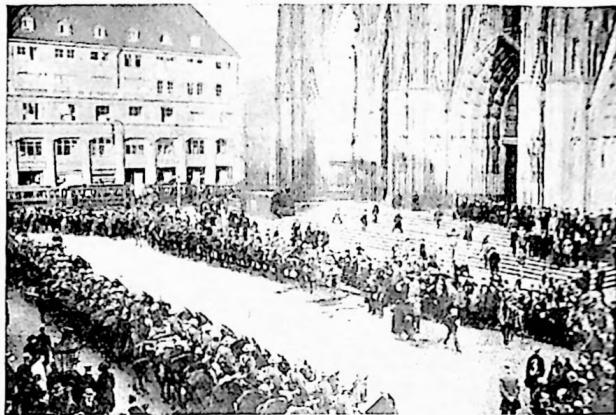
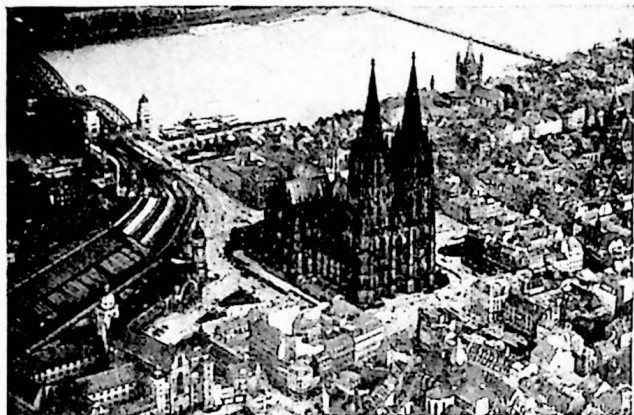
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THREEPENCE



Top left: Cologne Cathedral, with the main Railway Station on the left and Hohenzollern Bridge beyond. Top right: The British 1st Cavalry Division in front of Cologne Cathedral, December, 12, 1918.

Middle left: Aachen Cathedral. Centre: The Rhine, with floating ice, St. Martin's Church and Cologne Cathedral behind, December, 1918. Right: Entrance to the Hohenzollern Bridge—the Kaiser 'salutes.'

Bottom left: The German Army retreating over Cologne Suspension Bridge, December, 1918. Right: British infantry entering Cologne, December 13, 1918.

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THE ROAD TO COLOGNE

IT is months since the name of Aachen first came into the news. The shattered city now lies far behind the American 9th Army. After bitter fighting from village to village, the Americans reached the big town of Düren and left it, a heap of rubble, at their backs; they were half-way to Cologne. At Mödrath they forced the crossing of the Erft, the last river before the Rhine; there they were more than three-quarters of the way. And soon, from the wooded rise of the Vorgebirge, the Allies could faintly see, a dozen miles ahead, the twin spires of Cologne Cathedral, which were at the time of their completion—about 1880—the tallest piece of stonework in the world. Already, long since, American tanks have rolled into Cologne and the battle has ebbed away from those towers which the victorious troops had been ordered to spare. Then the great moment came when there was no longer “one more river” (but what a river!) “to cross.”

The road to Cologne has been a hard-won pilgrimage, and in the manner of it how different from last time! There are still plenty of us who remember last time, and I am quite conscious that we tend to be a bore about it. But as Toc H on the Western Front may conceivably be called upon before very long to take the road to Cologne—or somewhere else in Germany—I shall risk some account of the way in which certain other ‘Services Clubs’ got there last time.

‘The Big Push’

There was a prelude to Cologne which none of us who survived it will forget. In March, 1918, the last desperate throw of the German Armies fell upon General Gough’s Fifth Army holding the South of our line, a whirl-wind offensive soon known to all of

us simply as ‘The Big Push.’ For a month longer General Plumer’s Second Army, holding the Ypres Salient in the North, waited in uncanny expectancy. It was not quite a calm before the storm we knew was coming, for the enemy carried out weeks of methodical bombardment (what is now called ‘softening up’) of the ‘back areas,’ which, of course, included Poperinghe. Suddenly, before daylight one Spring morning, the area of the First Army, our neighbours, blazed into an inferno of gunfire; the Germans had driven a gap clean through the line at a point where the Portuguese were in the trenches. Within twenty-four hours the boundaries of the Salient, so long established, were on the move. We were ‘for it’ now.

I must not attempt any full-length picture of the whole stupendous episode here, for this is a purely personal sketch of how some ‘Services Clubs’ took the road to Cologne—of which the first stage was in the opposite direction. I was at the time Secretary, Y.M.C.A., Second Army (what Toc H nowadays calls a ‘Commissioner’), and that meant that I was responsible, from a Headquarters in Poperinghe within a few hundred yards of Talbot House, for no less than eighty Y.M.C.A. centres—buildings, huts, marquees and dugouts in all parts, ‘safe’ and otherwise, of the Army area. I had a staff more numerous and, at that late stage in the war, a good deal more uneven than that with which Toc H in B.L.A. makes good at the present moment. Within a fortnight of the opening of the ‘Big Push’ on our part of the front we had two of the original eighty centres left. That is some measure of the crash which at moments many of us believed (I don’t remember any of us saying so aloud) to be irretrievable. Soon we expected, short

of miracle, to be facing our 'Dunkirk,' though the name that was whispered was 'Boulogne.' It seemed to us like the end of the world.

Before long the evacuation of Poperinghe, apparently doomed, was ordered. Readers of *Tales of Talbot House* know how Tubby for a time defied the order; round the corner three of us clung on for a time to Y.M.C.A. Headquarters, but eventually all of us were eased out by the authorities. Tubby, 'borrowing' two small huts from my back-yard which were not mine to give, set them up at 'Dingley Dell' a few miles North-west of Pop.; I collected my dispossessed workers in the village school beside the shell-smashed Trappist monastery on Mont des Cats, a hill-top a few miles South-west of Pop., overlooking the shifting battlefield. Work did not cease for us; it doubled and its difficulties doubled again. We had our own casualties and could not easily replace them; we were losing to the enemy enormous quantities of stores, never so much needed by the hard-pressed troops as now. The big difference was that (to use terms familiar nowadays to Toc H in S.E.A.C.) we had changed over from 'static' to 'mobile,' as it is not impossible that Toc H on the Western Front may find itself tending to do for a period soon. For the Second Army, after four years of comparatively 'static' warfare in the Flanders mud, was now 'mobile' with a vengeance, and must not we, its devoted 'camp followers,' fall into line?

The Day's—and Night's—Work

At last, on an unforgotten night when we had watched the village of Meteren (and our own hut in it) blazing at the foot of our hill and had good enough reason to think we were being surrounded, I decided to lighten the ship. We formed up the oldest, most exhausted and least effective workers on the dark road and set them marching towards the French border. Thus relieved and lightened, the much-trusted handful that remained carried on in good heart. Every morning at first light we pushed out, in a couple of overworked 'Tin Lizzies,' all the transport

left to us, against the unceasing stream of the retreat, dropping here a man by the roadside with a boiler to brew tea for the walking wounded, or there thrusting cigarettes and packets of biscuits (need I add without payment?) into the hands of men, infantry on a brief halt, field batteries in action, who had scarcely eaten and had been without a fag between their lips for days. Every night we came back to our precarious base, not empty-handed but loaded with wounded and exhausted soldiers, to fill up for the morrow's work. We often spent the hours of darkness in an improvised Casualty Clearing Station, cutting the clothes from men's wounds so that the doctors could get at them more quickly.

It was a humble service, all we could do for fighting men who were deserving their wages a thousandfold. But in our little team, as in theirs, it had its shining gallantries, sometimes in quarters least expected, and in the heart of its grimness it held a humour that carried us on. We knew that our part was played only on the fringe of the battle (at some moments not many hundred yards ahead of us), but, as men so often find when death is just round the corner, we had never felt ourselves more alive and confident.

The Tide Turns

And then the 'miracle' happened—the tide turned. The explanation was twofold: the pace of the 'Big Push' had marched the German soldier to a standstill and, still more, the British soldier (as Napoleon had said, rather petulantly, of his forbears) "did not know when he was beaten." Into the Summer and steadily eastwards our tired armies began to push the deluge back. By the Autumn Second Army H.Q. was at Roubaix, outside Lille. There, alongside them, I heard the gunfire on the Scheldt beyond us die down suddenly at 11 a.m. on November 11 and saw the Mayor proclaim the Armistice from the steps of the Town Hall to a civilian crowd too worn out by four years in enemy hands even to raise a cheer. Soon rumour ran round, and at last became certainty, that Second Army was to be given the

honour, as men felt it to be, of occupying the Rhineland.

I was told, without any doubt, that our outfit was to go with them and to be at work in Germany at the first possible date. But as the time for the move drew on, a 'security black-out' (to use an ugly phrase, then unknown) descended upon us; at the same time the transport situation—and we had many truckloads to transport by rail and road—became merely desperate. I decided, as we had often had to do before, that we must 'get cracking' on our own. From experience we knew that if we got a job done by breaking the cordon of red tape, we should be first formally rebuked and then encouraged by the authorities in the friendliest manner imaginable. And so it turned out.

Gate-crashing at Ghent

Under the Armistice terms the order of march for both the British and German armies was carefully laid down. The Germans were to retire so many miles a day, the British to advance an equal distance; the interval between them was to be scrupulously maintained to avoid any possible clash, and the halting points were fixed. We were, of course, a tiny detail in this vast process, but for any such movement by car each of us would require a 'blue pass' from the A.P.M., a formidable affair printed on blue quarto paper in French and English and properly stamped. These were not forthcoming, so I made up my mind that three of us in a car should make a 'recce' (another term not then in use), gate-crashing as best we could.

At the first attempt we reached Bruges and, finding no British troops there, pushed on—against civilian advice—to Ghent. We got into the town with difficulty, for all bridges but one were blown, and found ourselves, a few hours after the last Germans had left, to be the first representatives of the Allies the citizens had seen. The whole city had gone mad with joy at its deliverance. 'Collaborators' were being ruthlessly hunted down, their property burnt in the streets. We three made an utterly vain attempt to rescue one Belgian woman who was being torn to pieces

by a large crowd. After a night in which we were alarmingly fêted and had to make speeches in progressively worse French, we watched at morning King Albert of the Belgians and Queen Elizabeth, with flowers in their hands, ride in at the head of the local regiment of the Belgian Army, amid rejoicings for which there are no words.

Unexpected Landfall

We turned back from Ghent, for the retiring Germans were only just ahead of us there, and, avoiding the route of the advancing British, regained Roubaix without being challenged. After waiting awhile we set out again.

In the vacuum between the two armies, the one advancing, the other retiring, we travelled all one winter day; the date was December 11, the Armistice just a month old. It was a bitter day, with sleet showers, and the roads in the murk of afternoon were patched with snow and more and more encumbered with the wreckage of retreat—lorries and guns on their sides in the ditch, a dead horse here, a litter of equipment there. Nightfall found us lost (we had driven off our map), cold and very hungry. We cleared a belt of trees on a little rise and found ourselves looking down on the lights of a considerable town in the valley below us. Here would be shelter and food.

We drove slowly down the hill and outside one of the first houses, a little shop, I bade the driver pull up. I saw that there were picture postcards in the window and had the idea that they would show us where we were without the indignity of having to ask a passer-by. But the cards hung against the shop window and the only light came from behind them; I could not make out their captions. I opened the door and walked in. A young girl behind the counter looked up, gave a little scream and vanished into the room at the back. I picked up a picture postcard—the name upon it was *Aachen*!

"It's alright," I said in German, "I only want to buy two postcards. I have never been in Aachen before."

She came timidly out of hiding; I made

my purchase, speaking to her quietly until she was more at ease. When I came out, an elderly German was standing near our car, staring curiously at it.

"Could you tell me of a hotel, sir?" I said to him. "We are strangers here and must spend the night."

At my first word he whipped off his hat and sprang to attention. He named a hotel and I offered to give him a lift if he would direct us to it. He assented but refused to join us inside the car; with his hat in his hand he stood at attention on the running-board, holding on to a side-lamp, in the falling sleet.

He led us into a first-class hotel, gave a sharp word of command to a tiresomely obsequious uniformed porter and departed. Hotel staff buzzed round us, garaged our car, brought us hot water for a much-needed wash. Then we faced the long dining room, full of elderly good-class Germans, at their dinner. We were led to a table at the far end, a little apart, and as we walked the length of the room the behaviour of the diners won our admiration. It was without exception 'correct'; they looked right through us and gave no sign that they had seen us at all. The dinner *looked* all right from start to finish but we rose from it still hungry. Every dish was *ersatz*, nothing what it appeared to be. We not merely detected sawdust in the 'wholemeal' bread but actually picked a splinter of wood out of it. The anxious waiter spotted that we did not enjoy our coffee, a weak decoction of acorns, and offered to bring us tea: when it came it was green nettle leaves floating in hot water.

Spilt Milk

Next morning we rose early in order to do an hour's sightseeing before we took the eastward road again. We spent the time mostly in the strange and interesting Cathedral, where more than a score of Emperors and Kings had been crowned and where Charlemagne, the greatest of them, was found centuries after his death, the books say, sitting on his throne in the crypt, awaiting the day when, like our own King Arthur, he shall

rise again and rule a 'brave new world.' On the way back to our hotel we found an agitated crowd gathered in front of a dairy-shop in a side street; an old woman behind the counter was sobbing hysterically. The crowd made way for us and I went in, I scarcely know why. They seemed to expect it.

"What's going on here?" I said abruptly.

"Please, sir," answered one of the women, "this is one of the depôts for the children's milk—only the children get milk now."

"Well?"

"Well, this morning two French officers came in and took away all the milk—for their pet dogs, they said. They will come every day, they said."

It was no concern of mine, but I saw red. "Bring me a sheet of paper."

They brought a foolscap sheet and on it I wrote in German, French and English that any Allied officer or man touching the children's milk would be severely dealt with. I signed it, adding the title, to which I had no shadow of claim, of 'Town Major, Second British Army.' "Put that in the window," I said, "and show it to any unauthorised person." I have often wondered if it worked—probably not at all.

The crowd stared dumbly as we hurried away to the garage and back to the road.

'Pass Friend!'

By the middle of the morning we were in the streets of Düren, uninteresting but very clean for a manufacturing town. There we came for the first time in our 'recce' upon the tracks of the British—the familiar red and black sign of Army H.Q. on various buildings. A 'red-hat' directed us to the A.P.M.'s office. I walked up to his table and saluted. He knew me well, and now, looking up, he said, a bit fiercely, "What the devil are *you* doing here?"

"I've come to do some work, sir."

"Where's your pass, anyway?"

"I've come to ask you for one, sir."

He laughed loudly. "The deuce you have! And where for, pray?"

"For Cologne, sir, please."

"Can't be done," he said, "The troops

aren't in yet—I have only a few police there, and no one knows yet what may happen to-night."

After a very friendly little argument he told his Sergeant to make out three passes for Cologne and signed them. "Mind, this is *your* pigeon," he said, "and you are not to come back on me if you get into trouble." We parted on the best of terms.

Into Cologne

We drove on down the straight road, we crossed the bridge over the Erft at Mödrath, we passed through the low wooded hills of the Vorgebirge. And now those tall twin spires of Cologne Cathedral, straight ahead, rose higher every minute into our sky. Right under their towering immensity we pulled up the car and stepped out.

First, a hotel! The only time I had been in Cologne before was as a schoolboy, for one night, but now the name and position of our hotel somehow came back to me—the *Grosser Kurfurst*. And there it stood, facing the Cathedral Square. Unlike Aachen, we were received here with black looks and a show of offhand manners. The moment had come to assume that queer rôle which we had never rehearsed—that of the 'conquering hero.' The British, as we often saw in the months that followed, are apt to fall down on it—a sense of the ridiculous keeps breaking in. The only way is to be very fierce to avoid laughing. We succeeded in being tolerably fierce and got all we wanted at the double.

This atmosphere was not pleasant and we decided to go out to lunch. As we sat in a big restaurant on the other side of the Square, two small girls in the street pressed their noses against the outside of the plate-glass window, greedily watching us prepare to eat. An elderly German, well-dressed, sitting at the next table, glanced at their bloodless faces, tipped the plateful, which had just been set before him, into the newspaper in his lap, paid his bill, thrust the newspaper parcel into one of the girls' hands and hurried down the street. In the milk-shop at Aachen that morning we had seen what foreign occupation, if uncontrolled, might mean to German child-

ren; now we were seeing, for the first time, what Allied blockade had meant to German children for a long time past. It was not to be many days before I was greeted in the streets of Cologne by a staff officer whom I had last met at Roubaix. At that time, on the eve of our move to the Rhine, he had rubbed his hands and said gleefully: "And now, you wait and see; *we'll* put old Jerry through the hoop!" This time his mood was very serious: "Look here, old man, what about these Boche kids?—they're running round with nothing inside 'em—something's got to be done about it." What was done, as history records, was that a deputation of British officers, on behalf of the troops, waited on Lord Plumer, the Commander of the Army of the Rhine, and requested him to ask the Peace Conference for leave to feed civilians in the zone of occupation. Leave was granted, and I saw the first food-ships, under the white ensign, come alongside the Rhine quays and unload in the presence of an eager crowd of citizens. British soldiers no longer felt themselves bound to give away all their rations, a military offence for which many were 'put on the mat.'

On the Bridge

That day, December 12, we learned, the British First Cavalry Division had entered Cologne and, before we arrived, had passed over the Rhine into the bridgehead beyond. In the city itself the only sign of occupation, beyond occasional police pickets, was a line of howitzers along the quay pointing eastwards, their limbers and an armed sentry beside them, their shells piled ready on the instant to swing into the breach. That evening, under a cloudy moon, we three strolled past them and up the slope to the Suspension Bridge (now, in 1945, smashed by our bombers). A cavalryman in a 'tin-hat' challenged us there but let us pass, at our own risk, he said. Halfway across we halted and leant over the parapet of the bridge. The lights quivered in the swift, silent stream, the moon glinted on the muzzles of the guns along the quay; behind the dark mass of St. Martin's church tower and the steep roofs

of the quayside the twin spires of the Cathedral soared into the sky, a silver ghost in the night. This was the sight so long hoped for, so often postponed in the weary years behind us; now it was before our eyes it was like a dream.

We walked across to the far end of the bridge and found two men on guard—another British cavalryman with a fixed bayonet and an unarmed Prussian N.C.O. Both maintained that it was unwise for us to go further, and we stayed chatting to one and the other. The Prussian, an old soldier, spoke with restrained passion.

"When I think of my country now," he said, "I have a fearful shame—just here," and he struck his breast dramatically. "When I meet some of those blighters (*Lumpen*) over there" (pointing to the sleeping city) "who run down their own Fatherland in her time of need . . . I am a soldier, and I am ashamed."

"You have done the world a great wrong," I said, "and you will have to pay for it."

"Yes, I know we have done wrong," he answered, straight and quiet, "we shall have to pay now."

We left him, exchanging salutes, with respect. They were not all like that.

'The Watch on the Rhine'

Next morning dawned grey, with a steady drizzle of rain. We awoke to a most unexpected sound, the skirl of bagpipes: the infantry were beginning to march into Cologne. We dressed hastily, drank coffee and went out into the Square, already loud with the rumble of iron-shod British horse-transport on its cobble setts. Columns, marching to the gusty sound of their bands, were converging on the Cathedral and disappearing behind its great mass to the approaches of the Hohenzollern Bridge, which springs behind the choir. At the police cordon, which held a German crowd at the foot of the Bridge, we were stopped, but the M.P. seeing our badges, broke the rules for us again. We might go up quietly, he said, and slip into an embrasure near the saluting point, beside the war-correspondent, Philip Gibbs. Thus an

official photograph of the crossing, dim with rain, shows four tiny figures in a great expanse bisected by the marching column of fours like a thin stream.

Those hours on the Bridge on December 13, 1918, are unforgettable. It was the 29th Division that was marching over now, veterans of Lancashire Landing on Gallipoli, old friends we had met in France and round Poperinghe. They had come no easy way, as we had, on the last laps of the road to Cologne; on broken roads, in dreadful winter weather, it had been one of the longest and hardest marches of their service.

But that morning no one, least of all the German onlookers, would have guessed their weariness. Instead of the ragged army Cologne had been taught by enemy propaganda to expect, its people were witnessing an Aldershot parade. Every regiment was played past by its own band to its own regimental march; again and again the Germans were expected to bare their heads to the colours of a battalion—and did. There was brand-new harness on the horses and mules, pipe-clayed ropes round the polished barrels of the field-guns, even the steam of pork and beans issuing from the chimneys of field-kitchens as they marched by. The 'production' was superb.

The Two Salutes

A few yards beyond us Lord Plumer stood at the towered entrance of the Bridge—as General Monash was doing simultaneously for his Canadian Corps on the Suspension Bridge higher up the river—taking the salute. The only patch of bright colour in this historic scene was made by the red hats of his staff and the rain-sodden Union Jack which flapped above his head. Hour after hour, as we watched, the great old Army Commander stood stiffly there, with his hand to his hat, with scarcely a pause; he seemed to miss no one, to be saluting every individual soldier as he deserved. And I wondered if anyone else had noticed how another Commander, willy-nilly, was saluting our 'old sweats' too. Lord Plumer stood at the foot of the colossal bronze statue of William II, ex-German Emperor, on horse-

back. The Kaiser gazed outwards, under his eagle helmet, to the Rhine; his eyes were averted from the marching troops. But in his right hand, held stiffly downwards at arms-length, he held his dishonoured Field Marshal's baton—and this was the posture of the salute of mounted men in the British Army. The fugitive Warlord was already hidden in Holland, but here, in effigy, he made his last acknowledgment to the "contemptible little army" which had compassed his downfall.

And so to Work

Next morning we got very busy with work for which we had come. The ardours and humours of it do not belong to this story—how we requisitioned, as a start, the largest music hall in Cologne as 'Y.M.C.A. Central,' how the first fifty of my staff, left behind in France for lack of transport, rejoined us—black as tinkers after a week's travel in horse trucks—in the very nick of time for Christmas dinner. There are so many memories of the 'Central' and our men who ran it—of the huge main hall, full of men singing, of the services conducted by John Kelman or T. R. Glover; of the debates led by Dr. Francis, the

classes organised by Leslie Hunter (now Bishop of Sheffield), the big library in the hands of E. W. Hornung, author of *Raffles*, who, for the sake of his only son killed in action, had worn our uniform so long and endeared himself to thousands of serving men.

When I left the Rhine, six months later, the work was well begun in many other places, now once more coming into the news. I did not see Cologne again until 1922, when I led a party of 100 Toc H Pilgrims, on their way to Oberammergau, to the 'Y.M.C.A., Central' for breakfast, after a weary night journey. My old stores-manager from Poperinghe greeted us; the Town Major of Cologne, Hugh Higgon, later Secretary of Toc H, South Wales, and his wife were our guests. By that date my successor in the Cologne Bridgehead, an area so like the Ypres Salient in size and shape, was in charge of an outfit vastly different from ours in Flanders five years earlier but almost exactly equal in extent—eighty Y.M.C.A. centres.

* * *

The Road to Cologne has not been the same this time. And the Occupation will be *very* different from last time. B.B.

THE ELDER BRETHREN

ALSTON.—On March 18, HILDA CÉCILE GEORGINA ALSTON, C.B.E., (widow of Sir Beilby Alston, H.M. Ambassador to Brazil), donor of the Rio de Janeiro Lamp.

The Rio Lamp was destroyed in the Revolution of October, 1930, but Lady Alston gave a second Lamp, first lit at Rio by the Prince of Wales on April 8, 1931.

ATKINSON.—Lost at sea, STANLEY ATKINSON, Lieut., The Queen's Regt., a founder member of Thornton Heath Branch. Elected 14.6.'28.

BRYERS.—On January 15, Rev. J BRYERS, a founder member and Padre of Bowers Gifford Branch. Elected 29.11.'29.

CORNISH.—After a road accident on November 27, 1944, PHILIP CORNISH, a member of Bowers Gifford Branch. Elected 25.6.'41.

DEACON.—On January 28, WILLIAM EDWARD R. DEACON, aged 77, a member of Calstock Group. Elected 30.9.'39.

GRAY.—In South Africa, PERCIVAL GRAY, Commander, R.N.R., a member of Toc H Staff at home, 1928-9. Elected 19.12.'27.

MAUDE.—On February 13, EDMUND MAUDE, aged 88, first Chairman of Crowborough Branch. Elected 19.5.'25.

REES.—Died of wounds in Italy on December 4, ERIC DUGGAN REES, Capt., R.A., aged 29, an early member of Llandridod Wells Branch, later of Cheltenham Branch. Elected 19.6.'35.

TURNBULL.—On February 11, Rev. MATHEW TURNBULL, a founder member and Padre of Carlisle Branch. Elected 14.4.'30.

WATSON.—On February 27, Rev. VICTOR ERNEST WATSON, Padre of Ilkley Branch. Elected 5.1.'44.

YEO.—On active service in Italy on January 31, CYRIL YEO, R.N., aged 32, a member of Golders Green Branch. Elected 7.1.'32.

COMMUNITY CENTRES—A TOC H JOB?

A member, Padre J. P. P. Gorton, Vicar of Goldington, Bedford, sees a big job for Toc H.

"There ought to be for every district or little group of streets, for every block of flats and, of course, for every village and hamlet, a regularly meeting, recognised neighbourhood group, with a right to discuss and resolve upon anything under the sun. I am not saying this ought to happen. I say that it ought to be made to happen. Every new group of streets ought to have its little Moot Hall."

THAT quotation by Sydney Dark from Cole's work, *Europe, Russia and the Future*, struck me because it so nearly echoed something I had already been trying to get across to a local public, advocating Community Centres, situated locally like this, as the best form our future War Memorials ought to take. I urged the need to avoid the mistake of putting up some massive central building, and that if such centres were really to serve the purpose of revivifying our national life, they needed to be like manure, scattered evenly about, and to be frequent enough to be just round the corner for everyone to take a place and pride in. I envisaged them as forming the necessary premises for all ages to get together to develop corporate interests, social, artistic, political, religious, and which might become a future sphere in which the Church, on a united front operating as advisory and assisting Chaplains, could work out in practice what Religion and Life Weeks have so far only outlined in theory. That an attempt is already on the way to 'make to happen' something of the Community Centre idea, is clear from Mr. Harold Butler's announcement that the Government proposes building them on a nation-wide scale. But there are distinct limits to success by public edict in *making* anything happen. 'You can lead a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink.'

Shortly before the war, one enterprising public authority put up a very fine public building to serve as a Community Centre to its new housing estate. But its influence for good was negligible; its programme of events consisted of rather disreputable dances interspersed with fiery meetings of protest against something or other. There is a real danger

that an immense expenditure of public money and effort will prove equally disappointing, unless someone comes along and puts a right spirit into what is still the most urgently needed local institution. Public authorities, alive to past mistakes, are planning to provide both new housing areas, and those of recent structure, with what they now see to be necessary social amenities. But they have no experience whatever in running such centres.

Wider Responsibilities

Who is to provide the art of teaching men to live together, and bring the needed vision and constructive ideals into place, unless Christians are ready to offer their help, in some acceptable and suitable form? It is Toc H which above all Christian organisations has specialised in this very work. I am aware, of course, that in the past Toc H has from principle refused to identify itself with any one particular cause, but it has given special consideration to other movements, such as for example to Scouting, for which it has had a special sympathy.

Hitherto it has never been called upon to help in the conception of a *new* movement, and by cross-fertilizing with the outside community, to help to give birth to a child, which belongs also to another.

Toc H, meditating on the fact of its Coming of Age, has sensed somehow that the realisation of this might suggest a radical change and enlargement of its responsibilities. But that the destiny of Toc H could include marriage (except perhaps to its Women's Section!) has not yet occurred to it. A movement that adds to its numbers, and grows in strength, may do so by the exercise of merely natural powers, while still remaining essentially in the single state. To transmit its own spiritual likeness on to another stock, that is surely the work of grace, and the fulfilment of the Divine promise. That is I think the supreme mystery that St. Paul is trying to express in Galatians, in speaking about the Jerusalem

above being free, and the mother of us all. As a Jew, he could only make more Jews; when he became a Christian, out of Jew and Gentile could be born the Church, a child with characteristics from both. Nothing less than a new birth is what the world needs in general, and England in particular. If community centres are to be of any real use, they need not just construction but birth, resulting from vision married to opportunity.

A Better Way

But returning to simple statement, the Community centres the nation needs and is promised will not work without the necessary guidance and inspiration. Already they are being misconceived. Mr. Butler himself provides sufficient evidence, when he states that, in answer to a questionnaire, the women he consulted were unanimous in their opinion that a public bar should be included as an essential attraction. Apparently they argued, poor things, that something would be needed to make things go, and for lack of a better alternative, they concluded that it must be drink. Has not Toc H been born to show England a better way? If just that one false step were taken, the Church would be faced in every parish with a most dangerous new rival. Indeed in many newly built areas; and where the blitz had fallen, for a time this rival might hold the field alone, and then our hopes for rechristianising England in the coming year would recede to vanishing point.

There is yet time, if we plan, not to capture but to play our part with others, in moulding the thing aright, and by the contribution we bring to it from the start, to earn our right to become 'foundation' members.

As I conceive it, the proper function for the community centre is that it should become a recognised home for all our voluntary bodies; the Church as the first and greatest of these should naturally take its place alongside the others, as a fellow-member on the floor of the house, much as a padre does amongst his fellow Toc H members.

Before we can hope for that to be possible, the Churches will have to agree to come in

on some recognisable united front, and, along lines already explored by Toc H this otherwise improbable event could happen. But something more is yet needed to convince others that the presence of representatives of religion is really necessary. Here I come to what I regard as the heart of the matter.

War Memorial

The whole building and running of these Community Centres should be initiated and undertaken as a public Memorial to the Fallen, and a thank-offering to those who have fought and striven by a grateful country, on whose behalf they have done so. Let us then urge that the Government makes its grants with this expressed intention. Let it leave some proper and adequate proportion of the cost to be raised by public subscription, as the result of which each centre would contain a permanent shrine to the Elder Brethren, before which continual remembrance should be made in the Toc H manner, by adopting its sacred symbol of Light. If, together with this, the Four Points of the Compass were accepted as the aims and objects which the institution set itself to achieve, the necessary spiritual foundation would be laid, and the development of the coming cultural centres in the Christian direction safely secured.

If anything effective is to be done, it must be done now. The ear, both of Church and of State, has got to be reached. Many of our local councillors are at this moment trying 'to think of a number.' No adequate idea for the war memorials which public opinion wants has yet been presented. All they know is that something more practical than stone Crosses is asked for. But those now neglected remembrances of 1914/18 did have the merit of being recognised at once for what they were, and of conforming to one general type. The field is open, and now is the time to urge the claims for the general adoption of an adequate conception, both for a War Memorial and for a Community Centre. If Toc H (and I plead here at the bar of its public opinion) made this claim its own, wherever it exists, it would be the ideal ambassador to

approach members of its local council, and to put the idea forward to the local churches. By these and other means might not the imagination of the country be captured, and a movement of great worth and moment, a true child of Toc H, come to birth?

JOHN GORTON.

A Prayer of Dedication

At the opening of a Community Centre,
July 8th, 1938.

"Brethren whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things!"

O ALMIGHTY GOD, Creator and Maker of Heaven and Earth, Father of all men, who hast given to them life and breath and all things to use to Thy glory and to the service of each other; give regard, we beseech Thee, to the work here begun on behalf of the people of this place

in which we dwell. Accept and bless the imagination of the architect, the skill of the craftsmen, the labour of the workmen, the good purpose of the councillors, the interest of the public, the patient zeal of the voluntary organisations and their leaders. Give courage, wisdom and tact to the manager and councillor responsible. May the doors of this building ever stand open to welcome the stranger, to offer friendship to the lonely, to inform the ignorant, to interest the unoccupied. May honesty, good sense and justice provide its foundation, friendship and understanding its supporting walls, and unselfish love prove its sheltering roof. May it stand before God and man to inspire and direct the younger, to encourage and refresh the older, to give health and strength to the body, truth and beauty to the mind, and goodness to the soul. Finally, O Lord, forgive and preserve us from all sins of selfishness and slackness, from misunderstanding and bitterness. May we learn to know and love and serve Thee better as we learn together the way of love and joy and peace. And may the Blessing of Almighty God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be upon this Community Hall, and make it a blessing to the town. Amen.

AROUND THE MAP

'B.C.' is Home!

BRIAN BONHAM-CARTER, the last of the five members of our staff captured on duty five years ago, is now at home again. Against the joy of his homecoming must be set the tragedy that both his sons have fallen in action during his time in prison. The *Times* of March 12, reporting that the Swedish liner 'Drottningholm' had reached Gothenburg with repatriates, said:

Arrivals included Lieutenant-Colonel B. H. Bonham-Carter, of the Indian Army, whose story made to-day's Swedish Press admiringly dub him the 'war's most stubborn Englishman.' On a Toc H mission to France in 1940, he fell into German hands. He was on the list of war prisoners to be exchanged at Gothenburg last September, but was returned to camp when he reached the German Ferry Station at Sassnitz because he refused to sign a pledge not to participate in further fighting against Germany. By pensioning him, the British War Office has now made him eligible for exchange as a civilian."

Congratulations

To Lance Corporal HAROLD ('BUNNY') GREATREX (Penzance Branch) on receiving the Military Medal from H.M. The King in March.

He was blinded, lost a leg and was wounded in the hand when driving his truck through an unknown minefield at El Alamein. After the inves-

titure he was the guest at lunch of Lieut.-Col. Sir Ian Fraser, M.P., the blind Chairman of St. Dunstan's. He also visited Toc H Headquarters—so modestly that no one realised his story until he had gone. He was welcomed home by Penzance Branch on February 19.

For Germany

Among the men selected for the Allied Control Commission for Germany and Austria is ARTHUR P. HAROLD, Secretary for the past four years of Lincoln Branch and District Chairman. He joined the Army at the age of 15 in the last war, and a year later was with the 5th Dragoon Guards between Düren and Cologne in the Army of Occupation.

A Baby Show in Burma

British troops of the 36th Division, deep in Burma, recently held their first BABY SHOW, organised by George Westbrook, who runs the Toc H Mobile Club with the Division. There were 50 entries—by photograph from their fathers' wallets. The winner was 3 year old Timothy Andrews, son of a Sergeant from East Grinstead, and his prize—rather oddly—a safety-razor, presented by the woman judge, an officer of the 'Wasbies' who serve with the Division.



Family Party in Brussels

HERBERT LEGGATE (Administrative Padre) paid a short visit in March to Toc H in the B.L.A. In the photograph he is seen (left) at the Toc H Club in Brussels, with—from left to right—Josephine Pote, Monsieur Desprez, Arthur Edgar (Commissioner), Padre Paul Webb, the Rev. P. M. Brumwell, (ex-Deputy Chaplain General), Mme. Desprez, Harry Ashton and Harold Mollond (Warden of the Brussels Club). Herbert was, of course, in Toc H uniform, *not* in an Argyll and Sutherland kilt, as in the last war.

A Relic of Gilbert Talbot

An interesting relic has recently come into the possession of Toc H Headquarters—the commemorative scroll, issued by King George V to next-of-kin of the fallen in the last war, sent to the family of GILBERT TALBOT, Lieut., 7th Rifle Brigade, on his death on July 30th, 1915. This was acquired by Mr. J. H. Prior of Nottingham on the death of Neville Talbot, Vicar of St. Mary's there. A note in the *Nottingham Evening News* brought it to the attention of H.Q., who, with the consent of

Miss Lavinia Talbot, Neville's and Gilbert's sister, wrote to Mr. Prior and received the scroll, framed, as a gift. This record of the man to whom Talbot House—and so Toc H—owes its name, will be carefully treasured.

A Party for Persian Children

On January 12, the TEHERAN CIRCLE (Persia) of Toc H threw a glorious party for 120 local children at the house of Miss Doolittle, a well-known American welfare worker. Tea and a Christmas tree, a talk with coloured lantern slides on the first Christmas, half an hour of conjuring and an hour of coloured cinema cartoons led up to gifts of useful clothing and sweets to every child. The balance of the fund raised goes to providing charcoal fuel for the poorest families.

Cardiff in Burma

A TOC H CARDIFF REST HOUSE in Burma already serves the troops. The fund, which aims at £10,000, has received contributions ranging from an old-age pensioner's half-a-crown to the £900 raised by a local Rugby match.



The Children of Poperinghe

IN POPERINGHE, as letters printed in last month's JOURNAL showed, the troops' celebration of Christmas was postponed for a month by Runstedt's untimely excursion into Belgium in December. In the programme, planned long beforehand, was to be a party in Talbot House for the Belgian children of the houses where our men were billeted. The party eventually came off in February, and the picture here reproduced suggests that "a good time was had by all." As Tubby wrote before the event to the Padre living in the House:

"Fathers and mothers now in Poperinghe, when they were children, looked to Talbot House for any happiness they had in war-time. Their children do the same, now you are there."

Indeed some of the mothers seen in the picture may well have been guests of one or other of the three Christmas parties in the last war which Tubby describes amusingly in *Tales of Talbot House*. During the last of these there was an air-raid, with no harm done except that—as Tubby writes:

"Some melancholy Jacques in the House of Commons started a question as to the number of Belgian children who had been massacred at a party in Poperinghe by bombs dropped by an English aeroplane!"

Ceylonese Members at Work

Sergt. JOHN SUMNER, a former Warden of Mark XI, Leicester, has started a Circle in the Headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander, S.E.A.C., in Ceylon. This has had several joint meetings with the KANDY CIVIL BRANCH, whose members are all Ceylonese. He writes:

"The Kandy Branch welcomed us with open arms, as we were the first crowd of other Toc H blokes they had ever met. They said that what they wanted most from us was news of what we were doing in Toc H at home; they were without any outside contacts and, whilst having the Toc H spirit, were not aware of our world-wide family. They are doing a terrific job of work by running a hostel of sorts where lads of 12 to 18, who roam the country earning odd cents and pinching the rest, can be sure of a bed or at least of a roof over their heads. Believe me, after seeing the lads in question, it would not be a job which I would tackle, in spite of 28 years in Scouting!"

Well Played!

At Chapel-en-le-Frith last September KEITH WILLIAMS, aged 7, son of a local member, handed over a jar of halfpennies, totalling 14s. 1½d., which he and his school friends had saved for our War Services Fund. Three months later Keith sent a guinea, also the savings of the same group of boys, to Gladstone House, Liverpool.

TOC H AND THE ARIS

A Drama Festival at Malta

NO one who has come upon Jimmy Allen in the Toc H Services Clubs in Belfast would put any ambitious project 'past' his imagination. He and Mrs. Allen have been working for some time in our Services Clubs in Malta, and it is natural enough that drama should have come into their calculations, but the scope of it, as revealed in a 'Souvenir Programme' which has just reached us, is rather surprising.

For a week, from January 22-27, a 'Toc H Drama Festival' went on, under the patronage of the Governor of Malta, Lt. General Sir Edmond Schreiber; Lady Schreiber presented the prizes at the end to the winning casts. Jimmy Allen, of course, was Festival Secretary, supported by a team of two officers and six N.C.O.'s as stage-managers, stewards and so on; a Toc H orchestra of Service men provided the music; the programme stewards were Wrens.

The list of one-act plays, and their casts of Service men and women, performed at the rate of four a night for five nights, is worth recording:

The Thread of Scarlet, by J. J. Bell—The Service Players (6 men); *The Dear Departed*, by Stanley Houghton—The Ammunition Depot (4 men, 2 women); *Recall*, an original play by D. Haig Burnett—The Histrions (2 men, 3 women); *Elegant Edward*, by Gertrude Jennings and E. Boulton—The Theatre Group (3 men, 1 woman); *The Government Regrets*, by Sydney Box—The Malta Command Signals (6 men, 4 women); *Elizabeth Refuses*, by Margaret MacNamara—Ladies of Malta Club (1 man, 4 women); *A Collection Will Be Made*, by E. Eckersley—30th R.N. Fusiliers (5 men, 1 woman); *No Shaking the Home Front*, original play by F/Lt. D. R. Farley (5 men, 2 women); *In Port*, by Harold Simpson—H.M.S. 'St. Angelo' (3 men); *Barbara's Wedding*, by J. M. Barrie—Tennyson Players (4 men, 2 women); *The Distant Drum*, by Philip Johnstone—The Service Players (3 men, 2 women); *Pantaloons*, by J. M. Barrie—The Theatre Group (5 men, 2 women); *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern*, by W. S. Gilbert—The Theatre Group (4 men, 2 women); *N=O: A Night of the Trojan War*, by John Drinkwater—The Tighe Players (6 men); *Dr. O'Toole*, by J. B. Fagan—The Irish Players (5 men, 3 women); *Tudor Thorns*, by T. E. Morris—H.M.S. 'St. Angelo' W.R.N.S. (8 women); *Heaven on Earth*, by Philip McDonald—The Service Players (2 men, 3 women); *The Bear*, by T. A. Tchekov—H.M.S. 'St. Angelo' (2 men, 1

woman); *Elizabeth Refuses*, by Margaret MacNamara—Wreaths (1 man, 4 women); *The Stepmother*, by Arnold Bennett—Ladies of Malta Club (2 men, 2 women).

The winning plays were: 1st—*The Bear*; 2nd—*The Distant Drum*; 3rd—*Dr. O'Toole*, and there were various prizes for individual actors.

The *Weekly Bulletin* of the Command Education Office in Malta for January 26 devotes a good deal of space to the 'Toc H Drama Festival.' It says:

"We could hardly let the amazingly successful Drama festival, being held this week in Command Hall, go by without our congratulations to the organisers and all those taking part. In the words of the adjudicator, Major Holloway, on the opening night, the fact that in so limited an area as Malta twenty one-act plays were entered for the Festival is not so much surprising as amazing . . .

Every shade of drama seems to be represented, from the broad comedy of *The Dear Departed*, through farce—*The Government Regrets*, to psychological drama—*The Distant Drum*, and the real heavy drama of Tchekov's *The Bear*. From an educational point of view this is all to the good. Far too many visit the theatre to see a story acted on the stage and far too few realise that their enjoyment could be increased a thousandfold by going beyond the story to an intelligent appreciation of the interpretation by the producer of that story, and that more than ordinary pleasure can be obtained by criticising (mentally, of course!) the various moves of each person on the stage, the setting of the scenery, the speed of action, the quality of speech, the cleverness of make-up and, above all, the expression of emotion by each player behind the footlights. All these are reviewed each night by the adjudicator . . .

The Festival is a credit to the hard-working players and a proof that a genuine love of drama is still inherent in the race that produced Shakespeare, a love that has here in Malta transcended all the difficulties of environment and fatigue and made possible the most interesting 'stage' week of the war."

The *Times of Malta* of January 30 ends a long review of the Festival with:

"Altogether the week reflects the greatest credit on the organisers, particularly Mr. J. Allen, and on the wide-awake and far-seeing qualities of the Toc H organisation."

And Madge Allen, writing home, says:

"Our Drama Festival was (we are told) a red-letter week for Malta, and from the congratulations which have been showered upon Jim he ought to be swell-headed, but not so—he just takes it in his stride and is now talking of a Pageant!"

It looks as if Peace will be celebrated in Malta in the grand manner!

A Picture Exhibition at Salisbury

Another instance of Toc H sponsoring the arts came from Salisbury a few months ago. Last November a 'one-man' exhibition was opened in our Salisbury Services Club, of water-colours by Helen van der Weyden, a member of Toc H (Women's Section) who has been nearly four years in the A.T.S. at Salisbury, engaged on camouflage work and model-making. The exhibition consisted of a small collection—of unusual interest and merit—of landscape and architectural subjects, not only from Salisbury itself but from Cumberland, Devon, Scotland, France, Malta and Kenya. The Women's Section Regional Secretary writes:

"Miss Helen van der Weyden wrote to me that had it not been for the great help and encouragement Toc H had given her, she wouldn't have had the courage to embark on this venture. It

was a huge success. The opening followed the tradition of Toc H in being friendly and informal, and we all enjoyed it immensely."

Miss Edith Olivier, who declared the exhibition open, said that—

It always gave her pleasure to come to the Club, because Toc H had a spiritual view of material things, that came from the practice of religion and the arts. She had often been to concerts here, but this was the first time they had held an art exhibition. She looked upon Toc H as a little cell of amateurs in the town of Salisbury, and she did not use that word with any derogatory meaning but in the sense that the amateur was one who loved music and art for their own sake.

It would be interesting to know if Helen van der Weyden, the daughter of an artist, derives any of her talent from Rogier van der Weyden (1399-1464), one of the greatest early Flemish painters.

A Concert at Southport

Readers of last month's JOURNAL will have already seen a note on the Toc H Concert at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon which, besides having a cash result of £206 11s. 9d., has been said to be one of the most artistic Concerts ever held at the Theatre.

On March 4, a month later to the day, another most successful effort took place in the Palladium Cinema, Southport, which was very kindly lent to us by Mr. Rank, through the Gaumont British Picture Corporation. This concert not only brought a new recruit to our ranks in the person of Lorraine du Val, known as the 'Canadian Ida Haendel,' but has so far made the largest contribution to the Deputy Mayor of Southport's £2,000

appeal for our War Services Fund, receipts being something over the sum of £250. The Choir and Orchestra of the Brockhouse Musical Society provided a very welcome and delightful background to the three Artistes, the other two being John McKenna and Gerald Moore.

This success we hope to repeat at Cheltenham on Easter Tuesday, when Janet Howe, the well-known Mezzo-Soprano, will be singing. Miss Howe is not new to us, for she sang the part of "The Maiden" in Martin Shaw's masque, *Master Valiant*, at the Crystal Palace at the Toc H Coming-of-Age Festival in 1936, and sang for us again in *Seventy Years of Song* at the Royal Albert Hall in June, 1943.

Choral Singing at Sevenoaks

On February 21 the Sevenoaks Toc H Choral Society gave a performance in the King's Hall of Coleridge Taylor's *Hiawatha* to help the Aid to China Fund. The *Kent Messenger* of March 2 reports:

"The Sevenoaks Toc H Choral Society showed that they have acquired a sense of the dramatic

by their rendering of *Hiawatha*, for they gave a forceful and well-interpreted performance, backed by an excellent orchestra, and with three soloists of a very high standard—Joan Taylor, Hindler Taylor and Douglas Taylor. . . . Responding well to the assured baton of their conductor, Mr. Norman Warwick, the choir gave of their best and sang with the obvious enjoyment which one has come to expect of this Society."